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DEPARTMENT FOR IO/UNP AND EUR/PGI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/22/2016

TAGS: PREL PHUM UN FUN AU

SUBJECT: AUSTRIA ON TRANSITION TO UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL:
STEPPING STONE TO BROADER UN REFORM?

REF: A) STATE 04745 B) STATE 04746

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Gregory E. Phillips
Reasons: 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) EmbOffs discussed UN reform issues on February 16 with MFA's International Organizations head, Dr. Helmut Boeck. On CHR reform, Boeck noted that UNGA President Eliasson would propose a new draft on February 21, but that the window of opportunity for completing this reform, in the GoA's view, would close by the end of February. He told us that the GoA, both as a UN Member State and in its role as the EU Presidency, endorsed the necessity of a thorough overhaul. He also said the GoA thought the Human Rights Council (HRC) had to be a significant improvement over the Commission on Human Rights (CHR). He said Austria has conveyed this view to Eliasson. Achieving resolution on the HRC issues would be an "enormous push forward" for all UN reform, Boeck noted.

¶2. (C) Boeck reiterated EU concerns regarding the possibility of a full-fledged CHR in the case of a failure to reach agreement on the Human Rights Council. As a CHR member and EU President, Austria had been deeply engaged in preparing for this eventuality, he said.

¶3. (C) Regarding management/budget reform and mandate review, Boeck said that some Member States, particularly the G-77, view the push for reform as "Western." In order to bring them on board, he thought, it would be necessary to hold out the perspective of a "balance" involving reform of ECOSOC and a new focus on development issues.
McCaw